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HISTORY

OF

WARREN, MASSACHUSETTS,

BY

OLNEY I. DARLING.



WEST BROOKFIELD :

THOMAS MOKEY, PRINTER AND STEREOTYPER.

1874.

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P R E F A C E.

IN presenting this work to the public, the author would indulge in a few introductory remarks :

History, to be entertaining and useful, should be reliable ; and while infallibility is not claimed for this production, it is hoped no deviations from the line of historical fact may be discovered. The material has been collected by personal observation, conversation with the oldest residents in town, correspondence with parties who formerly lived in Warren, and by careful examination of the town and church records.

The writer would here express his gratitude to Mr. S. E. Blair for aid kindly and politely furnished. Also to John Moore, E. F. Strickland, Alvin Copeland, and to all others who have, in any manner, assisted him in his labors.

If the perusal of this book shall be the means of moving the people of Warren to a greater interest in their local history and surroundings, the writer will feel amply rewarded.

OLNEY I. DARLING.

WARREN, Mass., Dec. 1st, 1874.

HISTORY OF WARREN.

I. LOCATION, BOUNDARIES, AND AREA.

WARREN is situated in the western part of Worcester County, Mass., twenty-four miles distant from Worcester, and sixty-four from Boston by turnpike road. By railroad the distance is thirty from Worcester, seventy-three from Boston, and twenty-five from Springfield. It is quite irregular in outline, although its greatest length and breadth are about equal, viz. six miles. On the north lie Palmer, Ware and West Brookfield; east, West Brookfield and Brookfield; south, Brimfield; west, Brimfield and Palmer.

The area of the town is about 17,000 acres.

II. EARLY HISTORY.

The first parties to settle within the limits of the town of Warren, bore the name of Keyes. This was in 1731, and the territory was then in the town of Brookfield. Others soon followed, of the names of Reed, Patrick, Brown, Makepeace and Jones. The

population slowly increased until, in 1740, the formation of a new town was agitated. In January, 1741, "in consideration of the difficulties under which the people of the westerly part of Brookfield, the northerly part of Brimfield, and the easterly part of Kingsfield (now known as Palmer) labor," the General Court was moved to set apart and erect a new town to be called Western. The bill passed the Legislature January 14, 1741, and was signed by the Executive two days later.

On March 8th, 1741, was holden the first Town Meeting. The officers chosen on this occasion were, Moderator, Noah Ashley; Town Clerk, Matthew Beal. Selectmen, Noah Ashley, Peter Rice, Solomon Keyes. Constable, Benj. Davis.

Among the first duties of the Selectmen was a survey of the town for the purpose of ascertaining the geographical center. This was found to be near Comy's hill, not far from the present residence of Patrick Flannery. Here, on April 18th, 1743, was located the Town Meeting House. At a town meeting held May 2d, 1743, the town decided that the dimensions of said house should be 45x35 feet, and 20 feet 6 inches between sill and plate. The sum of three hundred pounds was voted to defray expenses, and Noah Ashley and Solomon Keyes were chosen a committee to procure spike-poles, provisions and drink for the raising. All meetings, civil and religious, were held in this building, from its completion until its abandonment, about 1800.

The Rev. Isaac Jones was the first pastor of Wes-

tern. On July 20th, 1744, he was informed by a committee of the town consisting of Samuel Bliss, Gershom Makepeace, Noah Ashley, Thomas Rich and Peter Rice, that the "freeholders of Western had selected him for their minister, and they prayed for his speedy and serious consideration of the premises." His letter of acceptance is dated December 14th, 1744. Mr. Jones continued his pastoral relations with the town until his death, a period of forty years.

The attention of the selectmen of those days was largely engrossed by the location of roads. Petition upon petition for new highways poured in upon them, as the great number of roads in town, many of them discontinued, abundantly testify.

It appears that previous to 1762, the cattle were allowed to graze pretty much where they pleased. On May 21st, 1762, it was voted to build a pound thirty feet square inside the wall. This institution was located near Samuel Bascom's, and between his two houses, on the spot now covered by Butterworth's blacksmith shop on Maple street. In 1836 the establishment was removed to its present location, near the site of the first meeting house.

During the exciting times of the Revolution and the years immediately preceding, the people of Western were not afraid to declare their views of the situation. At town meeting, January 17, 1774, it was declared "that the plan of importing tea into America, subject to a tax by commissioners of the East India Company, was a very great infringement

on their rights, and threatened them with bondage and slavery." Other resolutions of a similar character followed, and the meeting closed by the adoption of the following spirited declaration of sentiment: "Loyalty and true allegiance to His Majesty, King George the Third, we heartily and sincerely profess, and will yield a cheerful and ready obedience to all just laws; and a hearty friendship with our mother country we wish may be continued until time shall be no more; but our just rights and privileges, for which our forefathers endured the greatest hardships, and many of them sacrificed their lives, we cannot give up and submit to be bondmen and slaves, but are determined to defend, with the greatest vigor and resolution; which is, as we apprehend, almost the universal sentiment of every freeman in America." Major Reuben Reed, of Revolutionary fame, was a native of this town.

After the death of Mr. Jones the town invited Stephen Baxter to become their minister. His letter of acceptance is dated December 6th, 1790, and he was ordained March 9th, 1791.

During his pastorate the project of a new Meeting House was brought to public notice. As regarded the location of this building the town was greatly divided. A portion wished it on the old site, while others wished it about half a mile to the west, which, by an addition to the town, had now become the geographical center. Town meeting after town meeting was held to no purpose, and the matter was finally referred to three disinterested parties from

out of town, who located the house on the common where it was erected in 1804. Mr. Baxter was succeeded in 1806 by Sylvester Burt, and Burt was succeeded in 1816 by Munson C. Gaylord. During Mr. Gaylord's pastorate, the Universalists petitioned for leave to hold services in the meeting house a part of the time. This was granted, but upon trial did not work satisfactorily, and the town granted the Congregational society the exclusive use of the building, reserving the right to hold town meetings in the vestry. (The succeeding history of this society will be found under the head of "Religious.")

About this time many of the inhabitants began to be dissatisfied with the name of the town. The similarity of Western and Weston led to countless mistakes in the transmission of the mails, and it soon became apparent that a new name must be provided. On January 13th, 1834, a town meeting was held to take action on the matter. A committee of five were chosen to select a name, and they unanimously recommended the name of Warren. The town petitioned the Legislature accordingly to alter the name, which was soon done, and the first town meeting in "Warren" was held April 28th, 1834. The name was given in honor of Gen. Joseph Warren, who fell on the field of Bunker.

III. RELIGIOUS.

The meeting house, as previously stated, passed from the control of the town during the ministration

of Mr. Gaylord. He was succeeded in 1829 by Oren Catlin, and in 1832 Mr. Catlin was succeeded by Charles Fitch. The next pastor was the Rev. George Trask, ordained in 1836. The creditable notoriety which he has since obtained by his radical Anti-Tobacco attitude, moves us to the following brief particulars of his life. Born in 1796, in Beverly, Mass., in 1812 he was apprenticed to his brother, who carried on the manufacture of britannia ware. Being converted in 1819 and believing himself called to preach the Gospel, he prepared himself in Gorham Academy, Bowdoin College and Andover Seminary. His first ordination occurred in Framingham, in 1830. And in 1836 he was called to Warren, where he labored ten years, since which time he has resided in Fitchburg, devoting his whole time to reformatory efforts in behalf of the Anti-Tobacco cause. Mr. Trask's ministry seems to have been eminently an active one, attended in an eminent degree by reforms and revivals.

It must be borne in mind that although the meeting house was in the hands of the Congregational Society, it still stood upon the common which was owned by the town. When the improvement of the common became probable, it was deemed expedient to remove the church, and it was accordingly removed to its present site in 1837. At the same time it was enlarged and improved in many respects.

The succeeding pastors have been Rev. Messrs. Charles Smith, I. H. Northrop, S. S. Smith, E. L. Jagger, and S. J. Austin, the present minister.

In April, 1874, by an explosion of gas, the church was set on fire and entirely destroyed, and the sexton narrowly escaped with his life. The society are now erecting a church which in point of cost, size, and elegance of architectural design, is not equalled in this vicinity.

This was the pioneer society in town, and now, by reason of its membership, wealth, and exemplification of the precepts given by the Master, it is entitled to rank as the *First* church in Warren.

The First Universalist society was organized in 1815, in the southern part of the town. Their church was built in 1821, and services were held until near 1833, when the organization was abandoned.

The Second Universalist society was organized about 1825, and for a dozen years held services in No. 1 school house. In 1837 their present church was built, and in 1839 the Rev. J. W. Talbot was installed. The other prominent pastors have been Rev. Messrs. Laws, Webster, Plum, Bradley, and Moore. The society is at present without a settled minister.

The Methodist society was organized in 1852, and for ten years held services in Union Hall. On April 20th, 1863, during the ministration of Rev. M. M. Parkhurst, the society chose a building committee of nine, and instructed them to purchase the church in Jeneksville, (Ludlow) which was accordingly done, and removed to Warren. Among the prominent pastors have been Rev. Messrs. Parkhurst, George, Satchwell, Locke, Godfrey and Tisdale, the present minister.

The West Congregational society was organized in West Warren, July 25th, 1865. The Rev. A. H. Somes was the first pastor, being installed in 1866. His resignation being accepted in 1869, the Rev. C. G. Weeks supplied the pulpit over a year. During his pastorate the present church was erected, the society having previously worshipped in Crossman's Hall. For over two years after the resignation of Mr. Weeks the church was without a settled pastor. The present minister, the Rev. W. M. Gay, was ordained in January, 1873.

Previous to the organization of the West Congregational society, there existed at West Warren a religious body known as the Order of United Brethren.

The Catholic people of the town have maintained services for a number of years, and in 1872 the present churches were first occupied.

IV. EDUCATIONAL.

For fifty years after the incorporation of the town, education was carried on chiefly by neighborhood enterprise. In 1795 the town was divided into eight districts, each district having the privilege of erecting its own building and managing its own affairs, through a Prudential Committee.

In 1842 the cause of education in Warren received a great impetus from the establishment of the Quaboag Seminary. The affairs of this institution were under the management of a joint stock company,

and it soon became celebrated throughout the State. The schools were reorganized in 1846, and one district added, making nine in all.

In 1847, in consequence of some dissatisfaction with the School Committee, the town refused to pay them their salary. This illiberality brought out a series of resolutions by one of the Committee, and the pay was soon forthcoming.

About this time the project was agitated of purchasing the seminary and converting the same into a Town High School. The town refused to make the necessary appropriation, but in 1850 the sum of five hundred dollars was voted for the benefit of the seminary, in consideration of certain privileges allowed the pupils in town. In 1856 the town purchased, for two thousand dollars, the entire seminary property, and the building has since been used for Town Hall and High School. The schools were graded at this time, and the cause of education in Warren looked bright and auspicious.

In 1869 the district system was abolished, and the town assumed entire charge of the schools. School house No. 1 being burned in 1872, six town meetings were held before the details of a new one were satisfactorily completed. Several times the building was located in unheard of and inaccessible places, and the matter was finally ended by the erection of a house near the old site. During the past year it became evident that more accommodations at West Warren were necessary, and a fine house, second to none in town, has just been completed. The schools

of Warren have always held a high rank, as is evident by the attendance of pupils from other towns.

In the State, having three hundred and thirty-six towns, only twenty-nine of them appropriate more per scholar. In our county, Worcester alone is in advance of us. Our rank, according to the per centage of our taxable property appropriated to the support of public schools in the State, is fifteen; and in the county, three. Number of school children in Warren four hundred and ten. Annual appropriation (about)\$4,800.

V. MANUFACTURES.

In common with most New England towns the first manufacturing establishments in town were a saw and grist mill. These cannot now be accurately located. The manufacture of powder was begun about 1812, on the present site of Knowles' steam pump works. After running two years the mill shut down for the same length of time, when it again opened and run until 1826, when the entire manufactory was destroyed by an explosion, and a work man named Curtis instantly killed.

The scythe business next claims our attention: This was begun in 1812, by a Mr. Richardson, in the western part of the town, on the spot now covered by the dye house of the cotton mills. Richardson sold out to William Taft, who conducted the business until about 1843. Taft was a genius. During

the surveys for the Western Railroad he loaded his gun and declared he would shoot the first man that invaded his premises. There have also been scythe shops at Warren and at the Lower Village, but now there are none in town.

The manufacture of cotton cloth was begun in 1815, in the building now occupied by L. J. Knowles' warp mill.

The first woolen mill in town began to run in 1816, at the Lower Village, and continued until its destruction by fire in January, 1818.

The manufacture of pig iron was begun in 1816 by Messrs. Field & Moore at the Lower Village, and continued for a number of years.

The manufacture of woolen goods was carried on for several years by Olney Goff at West Warren. He was burnt out in 1847, and in 1854 the building known as mill No. 1 was erected. No. 2 was built in 1866, and No. 3 in 1874. These mills are now run on cotton goods.

The first pumps made in town were manufactured by Daniel Hitchcock, and were of the hand variety.

Mr. Howe, inventor of the celebrated Howe Truss Bridge, formerly occupied buildings on the site of the steam pump works.

Ellis & Powers carried on the woolen business for several years ; were burnt out in April, 1850, rebuilt, and continued until their sale to S. H. Sibley, by whom the present mill was built in 1864.

The steam pump business dates back to December, 1861, when E. F. Strickland, with one assistant, in

what is now Ramsdell's boot shop, began to manufacture under Knowles' patent. In May, 1862, the old powder mill site was purchased and the works transferred to where they have since remained. The shop at this time was forty-five feet in length. In 1863 greater manufacturing facilities were necessary, and the shop was enlarged by an addition of fifty feet. Business still increasing, in June, 1868, the foundry was opened, and in 1872 still another addition to the main shop became necessary. The machines made by this company invariably receive the first award wherever exhibited.

The manufacture of edge tools, other than scythes, was begun at West Warren in 1853 by A. W. Crossman. In 1854 the present shops were built, in which the business of manufacturing shaves and chisels has since been conducted. Mr. Crossman may be appropriately termed the "Father of West Warren." Commencing business here when the village contained scarcely twenty houses, he has contributed in no small degree to the present prosperity of the place. It was owing largely to his influence that the post office was established in West Warren in 1862.

Boots and shoes were first made in Warren by the Union Boot Company, in 1855. Their shop stood on the site now covered by Brigham's block. In 1857 the property was purchased by Emory Shumway, who, in 1865, sold to Rice & Burroughs, who manufactured tape until its destruction by fire in 1867.

The manufacture of ink was begun in 1858, by John Moore, in a portion of his residence. It had a successful run from the first, and in 1866 the present shop became a necessity. In 1865 the manufacture of Blueing was added, since which time the business has steadily increased. The inks made by this company are not excelled, while their blueing is absolutely unequalled. In 1872 was begun, in Fairbank's block, the manufacture, under Fogarty's patent, of the Excelsior Gas Machine. Already the business has outgrown their limited quarters, and probably greater manufacturing facilities will soon be provided.

Many other branches of business have been carried on in Warren, viz: Axe-handles, brick, hats, carpet-tacks, boot and shoe lasts, jack screws and distillation of ardent spirits.

To the enterprise and "goaheaditiveness" of its manufacturers, Warren is indebted for its present prosperity. Through their efforts the town has been brought from a populaton of five hundred to over three thousaud.

VI. FIRE DEPARTMENT.

The first measures taken in town for the extinguishment of fires was in 1824, when Machine No. 1 was purchased by individual subscription. Although this engine is now out of date, it was the only one in town for over forty years, and saved a

great amount of property. On March 7, 1837, the town chose Harrison Bishop and John Moore fire wards, and appropriated the sum of \$35 for the purchase of buckets and fire hooks. In 1867, Quaboag No. 2, was procured at an expense of over \$1,800.

During the past season (1874) the town, in conjunction with Knowles' Steam Pump Works, have laid water mains in Warren; also at West Warren, in concert with the cotton mills.

The department at present consists of a well organized company of fifty men, engines Nos. 1 and 2, together with a hose company who man the hydrants. Annexed will be found a list of fires which have taken place in town. It is undoubtedly incomplete, but it is hoped it may be near enough to be of use.

1818, barn at town farm; 1818, Jan., Woollen mill at Lower Village. 1826, No. 1 school house. 1844, March 25, Bacheller Tavern. 1845, barn of Issacher Comins. 1847, mill of O. Goff. 1850, April, Ellis & Power's mill. 1856, (?) Newell Cutler's House. 1857, (?) No. 4 school house. 1862, J. Ramsdell's barn. 1863, July 7, barn of J. F. Hitchcock. 1863, Sept. 16, house and barn of N. G. Reed. 1864, (?) barn of D. Ellis. 1864, (?) barn of Alvah Foskit. 1864, house and barn of F. Hill. 1867, Sep. 3, Tape mill of Burroughs & Rice. 1867, barn of A. W. Crossman. 1868, house of D. O'Neil. 1868, April 25, Fairbank's block. 1868, Jan., house of Col. Lincoln. 1869, Oct. 4, Knowles' warp mill. 1871, (?) Warren Ball's barn. 1871, barn of R. Hen-

essey. 1871, Nov. 29, mill of S. H. Sibley. 1872, June 19, No. 1 school house. 1873, March 23, barn of Mrs. Orril Gould. 1874, Feb. 25, shop of C. Moore. 1874, March 19, House of R. Flynn. 1874, April 2, house of Mrs. King, West Warren. 1874, April 29, 1st Congregational Church. 1874, May 30, house of J. Haley. 1874, Oct. 31, house of D. Haley.

IV. THE COMMON.

Probably no town interest has been the subject of more discussion and contention than the common. It previously embraced considerable more territory than at present, and in 1825 was ornamented only by an old house and barn, the buttonwood tree, and the meeting house and sheds. The first measures relative to the improvement of the common were in 1837, when the town voted that the "Money received from Stone & Co., together with the avails of the barn back of the meeting house be left in the hands of the selectmen, to be appropriated toward leveling said town lot for a common. The funds amounted to \$14.30. The same year the meeting house was moved, but still the betterments continued to "hang fire." The next year the railroad was built, and the town offered the company the privilege of building their depot on the common, or the sum of \$250 in money. This action met the disapproval of many, and the same year it was voted to make no improvements. This settled the matter

for some years, but in 1846 the selectmen were instructed to look up the common grounds with a view to their improvement. Nothing was done until 1855 when the selectmen were instructed to remove all obstacles on the common and locate a town house there, procure plans and estimates. Town meeting after town meeting followed in quick succession, and Warren was stirred to its greatest depths. The town house plan failed and the common was graded and ornamented in the style to be seen at present.

VIII. THE CEMETERY.

Our vales are sweet with fern and rose,
Our hills are maple-crowned;
But not from them our fathers chose
. The village burying ground.

The dreariest spot in all the land
To Death they set apart;
With scanty grace from Nature's hand,
And none from that of Art.

The above lines by Whittier are a perfect description of the cemetery as it used to be, as those who are familiar with the old yard will bear witness. The oldest stone in the yard bears date 1756, although interments took place before that time. The yard was probably set apart as a burying ground soon after the incorporation of the town, and at first comprised about one acre. It has since received four separate additions, the last one being in 1848,

from land purchased from Rev. George Trask. During the past fifteen years it has received many creditable ornamentations, and after the contemplated removal of the useless trees, still greater improvements may be expected. The yard at present contains about twelve acres.

Mr. Jones, the minister of Western, lies here, as do many other local celebrities.

IX. POSTAL AFFAIRS.

The first post office in town was established about 1810 at the Lower Village with Joseph Field as postmaster. Mr. Field was succeeded by Daniel Hitchcock, who held office until removed by President Jackson in 1832. To Mr. Hitchcock is ascribed the distinction of having the office moved to the East Village.

Nathan Hathaway was the next postmaster, and was removed in 1837 ; Mr. Hathaway was succeeded by John Moore, and the sign " post office " again displayed at the Lower Village. Mr. Moore was succeeded by J. F. Hitchcock, and the office went to the East Village. A change in the administration next brought the office under the control of S. B. Richardson, and the institution came home to the Lower Village. Mr. Richardson was succeeded by W. H. Sessions, and the post office was moved to the East Village. In 1853 Daniel Russell was appointed post master and (shall we say it?) the office was

moved to the Lower Village. Mr. Russell's successor was Franklin Drury, and he moved the office to the East Village, where it has since remained. Mr. Drury was succeeded in 1861 by J. F. Hitchcock. The South Warren post office was established during the stage coach period, with Adolphus Hodges postmaster. This office has been closed for a number of years. The West Warren office was established in 1862, with Lewis Elwell as postmaster, and he has since continued to hold that position.

X. MATTERS OF INTEREST.

The soil of Warren is generally good, although portions in the southern part are useful only as they serve to hold the world together. The geological formation is principally dolerites and gneiss, and specimens of adularia, mica, and garnet are found in the southern part.

The scenic aspect of the town is not surpassed in Worcester county, with the single exception of Princeton. From an immense rock, a short distance southwest of the town farm, may be seen the entire extent of Massachusetts, from Boston to Berkshire, and from Monadnock to the hills of Connecticut. The improvements and changes in town within the last fifty years seem almost too fabulous for belief. In 1815 there were within a radius of half a mile from the common only twelve families. The tract between Maple street and the Brookfield road was

literally a howling wilderness, alder swamps and gravel hills alternating.

As late as 1840, when some changes in this vicinity were agitated, the Rev. George Trask said "that the Scriptures declared that the rough should be made smooth, and the hills leveled;" and if the proposed improvements were carried out it would be a literal fulfillment.

Although Nimrod never visited Warren on his hunting tours, it does not follow that the hunting was bad. As late as 1834 bears were killed on Coy's hill. Previous to this time they were quite numerous in the western and southern borders.

Among the oldest houses in town are the Warren hotel, and the residences of Mrs. L. Warriner, Emory Shumway and George Howard.

XI. STATISTICS.

The figures are for 1874 unless otherwise stated.

| | | |
|-------------|-------------------|--------|
| Population, | 1815, | 500. |
| do. | 1823, | 700. |
| do. | 1838, | 1,196. |
| do. | 1865, | 2,180. |
| do. | 1870, | 2,623. |
| do. | 1874, (estimated) | 3,100. |

| | | | |
|------------------|---|---|------------|
| Personal Estate, | - | - | \$393,684. |
|------------------|---|---|------------|

| | | | |
|--------------|---|---|------------|
| Real Estate, | - | - | 1,168,461. |
|--------------|---|---|------------|

| | | | |
|------------------|--|--|--------------------|
| Total Valuation, | | | <hr/> \$1,562,145. |
|------------------|--|--|--------------------|

| | |
|-----------------------------|---------|
| Number of Polls, | 796. |
| do. of Dwelling Houses, | 445. |
| do. of Horses, | 239. |
| do. of Cows, | 944. |
| do. of Sheep, | 129. |
| do. of Acres of Land Taxed, | 16,332. |

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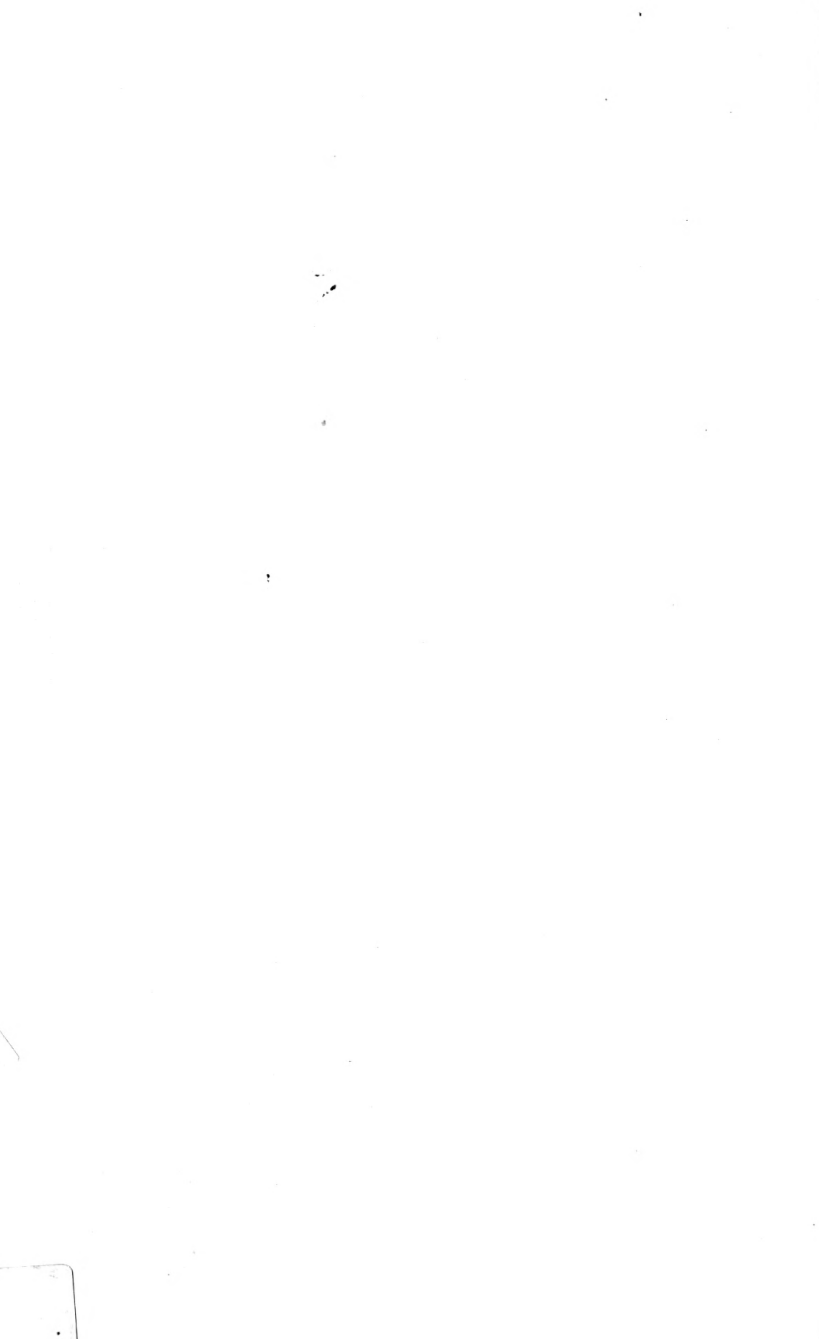
BY

OLNEY I. DARLING.

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THOMAS MOREY, PRINTER AND STEREOTYPER.

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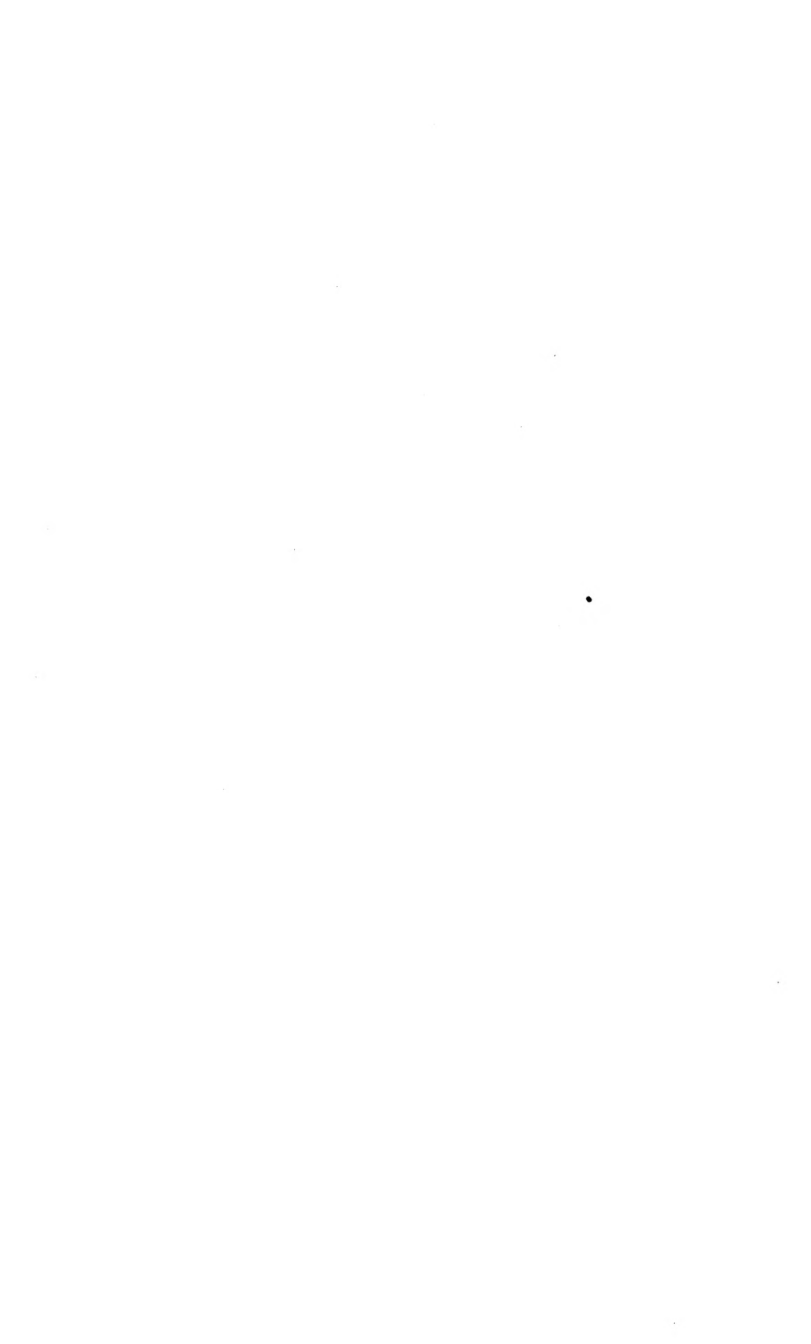






























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